

Rep Honda Calls for UN Aid to Somalia

Written by Michael Shank
Thursday, 28 July 2011 00:00

"The devastating famine in Somalia – and its spillover into neighboring nations - highlights, all too well, the fault lines in our foreign policy. That western governments have continued to ignore this failed state, refused to reconcile with the country's clan-based leaderships, and pursue counterterrorism efforts that only exacerbate Somalia's instability and do nothing to address the basic human needs of a dying population, shows how much we have to learn. If we want to lift up those who are dying, due to basic malnutrition, we must put aside our political pretenses, which have made it impossible for us to help the Somali people in the past."

"On too many previous occasions, we missed (and dismissed) opportunities to assist Somalis in stabilizing their country. Now that the country is dying, we must not forego this opportunity to help Africa's most needy and to ensure that the human security of Somalia's neighbors – in Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya – is no longer shelved behind the West's known national security interests in the Middle East and Central/South Asia. Famine has hit the Horn yet again. As the specter of hunger slaughters thousands, let us not be complacent or complicit in this act. Inaction is unconscionable. I call on my colleagues in Congress to move quickly. Every day we wait, hundreds more die."

"With an \$800 million shortfall in overall aid funding to Somalia – and with \$300 million needed in the next two months to help alleviate this crisis – western governments need to pony up and fast. We knew this crisis was coming and yet complacency, and the politicization of humanitarian aid, prevented action. We must restore our collective responsibility to act. The US government announced yesterday that it would give \$28 million in aid to Somalis. This is a start but hardly sufficient. We were once Somali's largest donor but have reduced that funding by 88 percent in two years, dropping from \$237 million in 2008 to only \$28 million in 2010.

"Further neglect of Somalia as it struggles with its worst food security crisis in 20 years will only bring further insecurity to the entire region. Stopping the famine now will save thousands of lives inside Somalia's borders and prevent hundreds of conflicts from spreading outside her borders as well. That's essential in the immediate future, though a food aid fix is no long-term solution. Somalis, not unlike Americans, need jobs and the country's infrastructure, which long ago rotted away, is in desperate need of repair and revitalization. Spoon-fed solutions may stave off the immediate crisis, but the right thing to do, going forward, is to invest in local Somali solutions and to ensure Somali society is sustainable and strong."